

New sponsor for Isthmian

WYCOMBE Wanderers, the biggest winners of prize money in non-league football, have a chance to earn some precious income with the announcement that Berger Paints are sponsoring the Isthmian League to the tune of £50,000 over the next few years.

The four categories under which money can be won have not changed since the Rothmans days, although there are one or two minor changes.

The Premier Division prize money list is, of course, the one that interests Wycombe. The new champions, in each of the next two seasons, will win £1500 with £1,000 and £500 go-

ing respectively to the second and third placed clubs.

Teams finishing out of the top three stand a chance of winning the £500 prize as the division's leading scorers. The top three are excluded in an attempt to spread the money to as many different clubs as possible.

The goal scoring incentives for individual games are still there, with £40 going to each side that wins by a three clear goal margin.

Most of the changes have come in the Sportsmanship Pool to which the Isthmian League attaches a great deal of importance.

SLIGHT CHANGE

In the past each team has started with eight sportsmanship points, losing one for a caution and four for a sending off. This year's system is slightly different.

This season each club is allowed 12 points. One point

will be given for caution, three points for a sending off for persistent misconduct after a previous caution, and six points for a sending off without a previous caution. The sponsors clearly feel that a sending off for two bookings is less serious than one following violent conduct.

Any team totalling 12 or more points, disqualifies itself from the pool of £2,500, which will be divided pro-rata according to the number of points.

In addition any club with more than 12 disciplinary points will not qualify for any of the prizemoney for a top three finish or for the highest scorers.

Berger will continue to back the Isthmian Youth Cup, the winners of which will receive £500 while even the first round losers will get £50.

Barry East, chairman of the Isthmian League, and one of the original football administrators to realise the importance of commercial support in non-league football, welcomed Berger Paint's involvement with enthusiasm.

"At a time when the good points of football are not always well promoted," said Mr East, "the Berger Isthmian League will be blazing a trail of exciting, attacking and disciplined football. This will set an example for all areas of the game."

"The spirit amongst Isthmian clubs has always been linked to a large and happy family," he added, "but there's no doubt that the incentives offered to the 64 clubs will lift and inspire them all to achieve even higher standards of actual play, sportsmanship and indeed comradeship in football."

TRICKY START

NEW Wycombe manager Andy Williams could not have received a stiffer baptism to his Isthmian League career with Blues, who must travel to Victoria Road tomorrow (Saturday) to play last year's second placed club Dagenham.

Wanderers will be encouraged by two factors. First they completed the double over Dagenham last season, winning 2-1 away last November with goals by Jock Mackenzie and Dylan Evans and triumphing 3-0 at Loakes Park with a late flurry of scores from Mick Hollifield, Derek Harris and Mackenzie.

The second factor is the Essex club's crippling injury list. Striker Neville Fox is nursing a bruised foot and Mal Harkins has a bruised calf.

Definitely out is mid-field man John Borland with a knee complaint.

During the close season Dagenham have made two exciting signings in Dennis Bond and Ricky Kidd. Bond the former Watford and Spurs mid-field player is an experienced campaigner, while Kidd from Sutton is one of the most exciting strikers in the league. Gone from Victoria Road are Terry Harris (to Sutton) and John Mitchell (to Tooting).

MIXED RESULTS

The club had mixed results from their three pre-season games, drawing 1-1 at Maidstone and winning 3-2 at Hertford before losing 2-1 to Enfield for the Dylon Shield last Saturday.

This last game between last year's Isthmian champions and the league cup holders was a bruising battle in which Joe Dunwell scored the Daggers only goal.

Wycombe are expected to field much the same side that lost 2-1 to Cheltenham on Tuesday night. The only chance is likely to be either Derek Harris or Dylan Evans back for the inexperienced Terry Scott. Blues will do well to come out of the match with a draw, despite Dagenham's problems.

Wycombe's youth team who are drawn at home to Leytonstone in the preliminary round of the FA Youth Cup at Loakes Park on Monday, August 28 (k.o 2 pm), have a friendly against Maidenhead Youth at York Road on Wednesday, August 23, (k.o. 7.30 pm).

IN THE first Isthmian League Premier Division match of the new season on Saturday, Wycombe Wanderers failed to repeat last season's fine win against runners-up Dagenham at Victoria Road, and went down by a single goal from Colin Mitchell.

New skipper Micky Hollifield led out a Wanderer's side with three newcomers. As two of these were strikers, there were high hopes that there would be signs of an easing of the goalscoring problems of last season.

In the event, and in spite of the Blues' having the lion's share of possession — particularly in the second half — Ian Huttley in the Daggers' goal was seldom troubled in a game in which both sides struggled to find cohesion after the summer break.

The first half saw a dour mid-field battle, with Joe Dunwell, for Dagenham, and Howard Kennedy, for Wycombe, working and attacking throughout. Honours between the two were even in the first period, but Kennedy gradually took control, and this led to the Blues' mastery of a Dagenham attack that only looked sharp in short spells, with ex-Sutton striker Ricky Kidd in particular causing problems to the visitors' back four.

As early as the third minute, Kennedy sent his strikers away down the right, and Dylan Evans put a fine cross over for Stewart Atkins to head just over from ten yards.

At the other end, Dunwell tried a long shot that went just wide, and Kidd started to tantalise Mead and Phillips.

In an end to end first quarter of an hour, Kennedy once again crossed perfectly from the right, this time for Steve Long to head over.

But on twelve minutes came the Dagenham goal. A free kick, centrefield, just inside the Wycombe half was well taken by Denis Moore, floating the ball high into the box. Mal Harkins headed on, and Peter Spittle's two handed punch angled the ball off for Mitchell to head high into the net. Paul Birdseye's valiant effort to clear, just failed.

After the goal, Wycombe began to put more pressure on Dagenham and with Kennedy continuing to set up attacks on the right, Hollifield joined in, and several times sent Long away on the left.

Mitchell nearly had a second goal midway through the half after another piercing run from Dunwell, but the last minutes of the period saw Blues getting on top.

TOTAL CONTROL

If Dagenham were a little fortunate to go in at half-time a goal up, the first half an hour of the second half saw total control from Wycombe.

Great gaps appeared in the

DAGENHAM 1, WYCOMBE WANDERERS 0

Daggers' midfield as everyone was called into defence, and it was six minutes before the ball got into the Blues' half of the field.

After fifty-five minutes, Norman Welch was substituted after receiving a knock, and Reg Harris steadied the hard-pressed home defence, and lent balance to a midfield that was being overplayed.

The best chance for Wycombe to equalise came on 57 minutes, when Hollifield, a dozen yards out was caught wing-footed with room to spare.

Three minutes later, Bobby Davies saved on the line from a powerful Harris header, and im-

mediately Kennedy saw a fine header fly straight to Huttley at the other end.

Atkins had a good effort saved after 65 minutes, and Kennedy, Evans and Long worked well to see Long's header just graze the crossbar. Dagenham were still dangerous in patches.

Dave Alanson for Wycombe was substituted by John Priestley for the last quarter of an hour.

The Wanderers' play was more exciting than for much of last season, and the back four played as well as ever in front of an unsure Spittle. Kennedy played well enough for three men in midfield, but it was up front that the doubts still

lingered.

With the possession that Wycombe commanded for long periods of the game, a goal always looked likely. The fact that it never came was not because of a weak Dagenham defence.

Dagenham: Ian Huttley, Peter Wellman, Terry Scales, Joe Dunwell, Norman Welch, (Reg Harris 55 mins), Denis Moore, Mal Harkins, Colin Mitchell, Ricky Kidd, Dennis Bond, Jim Holder.

Wycombe: Peter Spittle, Paul Birdseye, Bobby Davies, Keith Mead, Alan Phillips, Dave Alanson, Stewart Atkins, Micky Hollifield, Dylan Evans, Howard Kennedy, Steve Long, (John Priestley for Alanson 75 mins).